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ISTHMIAN CANAL, CAUSES
OF DELAY IN CONSTRUCTION





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AN ISTHMIAN CANAL.

CAUSES OF DELAY

IN CONSTRUCTION.



An Address Delivered at

PHILADELPHIA,

June 13, 1901.

BY

SEWALL C. COBB,

of Pensacola, Fla.

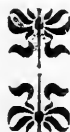
*Before the Southern
Industrial Commission*

Exports of Pensacola,

1895, \$3,140,000.

1900, \$14,349,000.

Depth of Channel 30 ft.





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AN ISTHMIAN CANAL.

The Outlook and Causes of Delay in Construction.

Five hundred and fifty million of people of the Far East for half a century have entreated us to open a highway through the narrow strip of land that connects the two great continents of America.

They have extended their hands of welcome to us, but we have had at the helm of the ship of State, men of limited maritime information.

The bronzed visage of labor has gazed, and the hands have pointed towards those *now* distant marts of commerce, and declared we want the opportunity to cement our "brotherhood of mankind," by enlarged and rapid commercial intercourse, but a deaf ear has been turned to *their* requests.

When our military arm sought opportunity for promotion (in rank) our officials rushed to a conflict with a people (of less than ten million in population) and already have expended in the effort to inoculate them with "benevolent assimilation," upwards of three hundred millions of dollars, and countless lives.

This money expended in the other process, "commercial assimilation," would have constructed the Nicaragua Canal, and established lines of steamships (numbering not less than 100, each of 5,000 tons capacity), carrying of our own products, not less than six million tons annually, to the waiting customers, who would love to see again, as in olden time, the star spangled banner floating from the ship's lofty main,

AN ISTHMIAN CANAL.

The 20th century calls for human advancement. We of the South learned at the close of the war, that if we would develop our resources, the Angel of Peace must spread *her* white pinions over all the land, and the military arm must be subservient to the Civil Authority.

The claim of would be statesmen, "that it was not known that we were a political world-power, and were only revealed by the Spanish war," is nullified by the utterances of many distinguished foreigners. See page 335, "Key of the Pacific." The author, the official agent of the British Government, declares: "I believe that the Canal can be made, and that long hindered by political difficulties alone, it will now be carried out under the auspices of the United States Government."

"The Canal is a necessity of the age, and were the cost double what I estimate it to be, the immense benefits certain to result, would amply justify its execution. It will bind together the remote sections of that immense country, assimilate its diverse interests, go far towards solving many difficult problems, and make the United States still more united." This was printed at Westminster, England, Oct. 30th, 1895, and we pause to ask why has this condition not been *met* by our national *action*?

We now wish to allude to some of the causes of "delay."

THE CAUSES OF DELAY IN PROVIDING AN OPEN DOOR FOR MARITIME TRAFFIC TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

In 1850, while residing in New Orleans for the winter, and engaged in the construction of the "Louisiana" drydock (for the repair of shipping), many questions of national interest were debated.

First of all was that relating to a canal from Greytown on the Atlantic to Brito on the Pacific ocean. Cornelius Vanderbilt was running a line of steamers across Lake Nicaragua, connecting via the San Juan river on the east with the Atlantic steamships, and by stage on the west end the ocean traffic.

We held conversation often with men of intelligence who were personally cognizant of the natural conditions, and saw no obstacle to prevent the construction by the nation of a canal.

Someone may say it was not known at that date what commerce would require. That was true of the citizen in the interior, but not of those whose *business*, or family relations, kept them in touch with the intelligent shipmaster, and merchant.

Great Britain saw the cloud "not bigger than a man's hand," and sought to bind us by a treaty, (the Bulwer-Clayton), for which we had no use (as it manacled us for all time), and she procured it by the expenditure of not exceeding five hundred dollars in champagne, and Clayton's champagne treaty has returned to Great Britain a million dollars for every dollar expended in its procurement.

THE CLAYTON-BULWER TREATY.

The Clayton-Bulwer treaty is only a pretext for delay. That Great Britain had nothing to contribute to the project of a canal, *except* money, is true. Her occupation of the Mosquito Coast was more of a *bluff* than from anything intrinsic at that time appertaining to the territory. She thought that *reinforced* by a treaty, her occupation of the eastern terminal of the Canal would give her at least a cloud upon the title of any concession the United States might obtain from Nicaragua.

The taking over of the "Pellas Concession" by the Atlas Steamship Co. (British), and their endeavors to make their rights, not only perpetual, but superceding those of any canal company, gives plain evidence of her intention to evade all questions of paramount interest, not only to the United States, but all the rest of mankind.

We cannot concede the right of any nation to *dictate* either locality, or manner of occupation, to those whose mutual interests demand a work free from all entangling alliances.

Costa Rica, Nicaragua and the United States of America are competent to decide what is *best* for their interests. They have no disposition to impose upon the commercial interests of the world *any* burdens which it ought not to bear, and if left *unfortified*, the cost will be largely reduced, and all burdens lightened.

We have come, or are rapidly coming, to the time when the intelligent toilers of the world will say, "there shall be no more war of nations. The shedding of blood of friends to gratify the ambitious, or whims, of so-called statesmen must cease.

It is true that we will have to meet and conquer the idea that the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, who has declared that "not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice," loves to see man drenched in his brother's blood.

The inventors who have given us an open door to swift converse and travel, have broken down more of the barriers against humanity, in a decade, than all the exploits of the military have overcome in sixty centuries.

"have you no questions to ask the Captain" was, "all I want to know is; how my constituents can get 25 cents a bushel for their *potatoes*, and I can get my renomination; if the captain can tell me that, I'll be happy."

I have mentioned one of the strong causes of delay in *action*. Let us ask what has been the *manner* of Great Britain in her commercial intercourse with Colonies and other Nations.

My grandsire, who fought all through the war of the Revolution, from his 18th year to his 26th year inclusive, on the day before he passed from the earthly life, at the age of 85 (1842), rehearsed to a group of ten boys (his grandchildren), the causes of the war for independence on the *land*; also the cause of the war of 1812 in which his two sons had to fight to obtain independence on the *sea*, and warned us boys, that before we should be gray, we would have to go through a third conflict to obtain, or maintain, our commercial independence. ("Bulwer" manacled us just eight years afterwards.) He referred to Great Britain's acts which prohibited all trading to or from plantations, except in English built ships.

ENGLAND'S COMMERCIAL POLICY.

America abounded in *iron ore*, but England was dependent on the iron industry; her laws, therefore, forbid all iron manufacture in the Colonies. No smith might make so much as a bolt, or a spike, or a nail.

America abounded in *furs* which began to be used in making hats. Parliament forbid their exportation, even from Colony to Colony.

"Lecky," (the historian), says "the deliberate and malignant selfishness of English commercial legislation was digging a chasm between the mother country, and the Colonies, which must inevitably, when the latter became strong enough, lead to separation. Lecky further says—"England made it the fixed maxim of her commercial policy to repress the commercial prosperity of her Colonies by crushing every industry that could possibly compete with the home market."

We won from England a right to life, and Liberty, and it now remains to *us*, to the administrators of this Nation, to contend for the right to the pursuit of happiness, by opening the great commercial highway.

Here in this historic city, we renew our declaration of *independence*, and declare we *will continue* the pursuit of happiness through an independent Isthmian Highway, by the construction of the *Nicaragua Canal*.

Here one word of lateral interest. It is not only the *distance* saved in the transit by water, but those who are conversant with the facts know that the weary days spent in contests with the storms, and cur-

rents off Cape Horn, cost more in the wear and tear of ships than all the other miles sailed on the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans, in voyages from Atlantic ports to Northern ports of the Pacific.

From Pensacola, an English ship which was loaded with 2000 tons of pig iron, and several thousand bales of cotton (under my inspection) was compelled, after three desperate attempts, to pass Cape Horn, to square away, and make the run over the long stretch of sea, East.

We now consider another direct cause of delay: The necessity of preserving to Great Britain the advantage she has at present in distance via the Suez Canal has been noted; another equally as strong was stated by the *commissioners* in my interview with them. "You know," said Mr.——, "that if the United States are permitted to construct the Nicaragua Canal, it will cut the value of the Suez Canal right in two in the middle." "Yes sir, it will take at least a million of pounds from its *"income."*

It is customary, even in this country, to consider *that* a just cause for strenuous opposition.

We will look over the delaying causes nearer home. You may have noticed how some of our Southern journals, published in the cities which would receive the greater benefits, allude to the Canal as "that ditch," and if asked for an opinion, would reply as did Esign Stebbins of Massachusetts to the query "are you in favor of the Maine Law, Ensign?" "Yes: I am in favor of the Maine Law, but I am *agin* its enforcement."

I have no hesitation in saying, that such publications have their price, and free passes are more potential than increased business (in prospect) for their ports.

The strenuous efforts made to impose upon us that "gold brick" known as the Panama Canal, receives now and then, a gleam of sunshine from the other opponents of the Nicaragua Canal; not that there is, or has been for years, *any intention* of constructing it.

The *Commissioners* avowed there would be *no Panama Canal*, if we, (the United States) did not construct the *Nicaragua Canal*.

They conceded that by their own country's action, Britain had violated, not only one, but *several* sections of the Bulwer Treaty, but as we made no protest *at the time*, we conceded its continued vitality, and they declared it would serve the purpose of delaying for years to come, any action be the Congress of the United States

Remember this conversation took place July 14th, 10 p. m. 1895, and that Great Britain *has accomplished* all they declared she would in the matter of *delay*, and in the *manner* that would be pursued.

We have labored for years to convince the majority in Congress that the open door between our East and our West coasts should be under the direct control of the Nation.

We cannot permit our common sense to be insulted by the assumption that a financial *corporation* of millionaires can maintain better conditions of transit than the Government, directed by 100 million of its citizens, each and every one being, or to be, a sovereign.

Since the eminent De Lesseps, not only in his souvenirs, but elsewhere, expressed himself in this language: "it was very clear the Nicaragua Canal was the *best of Canals with locks*; if one were completed to adopt that system." Our attention has been called to the actual conditions, and we can confidentially assert that the expenditure of \$500,000,000 will not provide a *sure* and *safe* transit at all periods at Panama. All that goes to change the natural conditions existing, must be provided at an immense cost, while at Nicaragua, we have the primary essential, water, in unlimited supply

Now, we say, that it is well known to all men who are intelligent upon the subject, that when the project of a *sea-level* Canal is thrown away, the value of the Panama location is obliterated.

We have lost too many friends on the line of the Panama Canal to have it retain a position of any value in mere *location* in our consideration of an Isthmian Canal.

The project is to delay to the remotest time possible, the construction of *any* Canal, and for that purpose, not less than three million dollars per annum is spent in order to delay the passage of the proper legislation by Congress.

The *enemies* of the Nicaragua Canal, and the commercial expansion of the United States, are wildly shouting "earthquakes, terrific storms, antipathy of foreign Nations," while winking with fiendish eyes at each other, and signalling delay—delay.

Gentlemen of the convention: I have not found in my fifty years of labor as the friend of a Canal, any opposition other than that which has its recompense in *CASH*.

Except in *some* cases it *was* owing to a limited capacity, incapable of understanding its value to the Nation.

For sixty years the friends of my childhood have buffeted the storms of the Antarctic in passing Cape Horn: many have perished in the struggle; nevertheless, their strenuous labors have aided in building up our Pacific States, and a goodly amount of commerce.

Had we possessed the open door (the Nicaragua Canal), our line of development would have equalled in amount of tonnage that of the "Sault St. Marie," and today we would be dominating the commerce of the Pacific Ocean.

With prophetic vision we now can see a constructed Canal; our white winged messengers with 3, 4, 5, 6, *yes* 7 masts are competing with the steam carriers of the world's commerce. I see them auxili-
aried by the use of speedy launches, fired with the product of the flow-
ing oil wells of Texas. Our Southern forests have furnished the
essential woods, our furnaces, and mills have rolled out the metals,
our fields have given their yield of cotton to catch the inspiring
breezes as they are moving below, and aloft, and all the songs that
greet our listening hearts are of *Peace*. "Home, fare thee well. land
of the free, no tongue can tell the love I bear for thee," we hear the
mariner singing as he shapes his course to Foreign lands.

With this great highway completed, the Star Spangled Banner
will resume its old time place at the front of all commercial Nations;
not a *color* to fade, or a *star* to grow dim, until they melt into the light
of the glorious millennial morning, when all the world shall be at
Peace, and every man accord to his neighbor the felicities of *unclouded*
Brotherhood.

POSTSCRIPT.

The criticism of the address as delivered in Philadelphia although
the critic (a lineal descendant of Annanias) did not quote what I *said*,
but what was entirely his own statement and never referred to by me
in the address, leads me to call attention to the facts, that would de-
mand stronger language than I used to designate them.

The addition of 40,000 men to the regular army, the result of our
Phillipine action, will cost us annually, directly, and indirectly \$20,-
000,000. The annual interest on the expenditures *already incurred* will
be about \$10,000,000, a total of \$30,000,000 per annum.

When the Canal is completed the tolls should not be levied at a
rate that will pay above \$6,000,000 net revenue. This will leave as the
annual *tax* on our "benevolent assimilation" \$24,000,000 in contrast to
our "commercial assimilation" net revenue \$6,000,000, to which may
be added the profit on commercial transactions of \$10,000,000 more, a net
result of \$40,000,000 annually above the plans pursued after the Spanish
American war had been most righteously fought, gloriously won and
the treaty of peace signed. The writer addressed to Hon. John Sher-
man, Secretary of State, a telegram on the day following the blowing
up of the "Maine:" "Demand of Spain \$25,000,000 indemnity; if not
settled in 48 hours call for 50,000 volunteers, take and hold Cuba in
the interests of *Peace*. That does not incline me to look upon the effort
to obtain promotion in *rank* as other than a debauchery of the Ameri-
can principle.

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